The 13th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda
Implementation of the mandate and programme of work –
Consideration of thematic studies
Conference Room 6, United Nations Headquarters, New York

An interactive chapter-by-chapter discussion on the draft international covenant on the right to development

Thursday 23 April 2026, 10:00 to 13:00

Unofficial transcript of the oral statement by the Philippines

The Philippines aligns itself with the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement and thanks the EMRTD and, of course, the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development, as well as the drafting group, which made a very clear and comprehensive presentation. So, the Philippines reaffirms our consistent support, including in the United Nations Human Rights Council, for advancing the operationalization of the Right to Development.

This right, for us, is universal, inalienable and integral, with the human person at its centre, and remains a cornerstone of the international human rights and development architecture. Human rights and development, for us, are mutually reinforcing, interdependent and indivisible, and are essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its realization requires a rights-based, participatory, inclusive, transparent and accountable approach anchored in leaving no one behind, with States bearing their primary responsibility to ensure its full enjoyment, especially for those in vulnerable situations. At the national level, this commitment of the Philippines is reflected in "Ambisyon Natin 2040" and in our Philippine Development Plan for 2023 to 2028. At the regional level, we also highlight the ASEAN Declaration promoting the Right to Development and the Right to Peace towards realizing inclusive and sustainable development, which reinforces shared commitments to inclusive and sustainable growth.

The Philippines underscores that the right to development is both a means and an end, requiring an enabling international environment grounded in sovereign equality, mutual respect and international solidarity. International cooperation must therefore support, not constrain, national policy space while addressing global challenges such as climate change, public health crises and inequalities.

Excellencies and colleagues, we see value in advancing discussions towards this legally binding instrument that strengthens implementation and accountability while ensuring coherence with existing frameworks. As a draft International Covenant proceeds to the United Nations General Assembly, we emphasize that this technical exercise should inform without prejudging intergovernmental negotiations. We note the inclusion of Articles 3 on general principles, as well as Articles 4 to 7, which were very clearly presented by Professor Desierto.

We do note that these articles are very helpful in assisting States Parties to implement the provisions and in laying out these principles and their relationship with other instruments. We support that the language used in this draft Covenant remains unequivocal, meaning not subject to any other interpretation which could make implementation and interpretation difficult. To conclude, the Philippines remains committed to constructive engagement towards a balanced and widely supported Covenant.

* * * * *